





CURRAN (John Philpot)

A
L E T T E R

T O

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

EDMUND BURKE,

O N

THE PRESENT STATE

O F

I R E L A N D.

— Libertas: quæ fera tamen, respexit inertem; —
Respexit tamen, et longo post tempore venit.

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L E T T E R.

AS a general friend to mankind, to whom could the calamities of this unfortunate nation be more properly addressed than to you? But I claim your attention by a nearer and a tenderer title. A proud country, that in the fondness of her vanity delights to call you her son; that rejoices in every fame that can exalt your character, and is wrung by every grief that can afflict your heart, has a more than ordinary claim to your attention. In virtue of that claim do I now presume to submit to you some thoughts on the present alarming state of Ireland. Will you forgive the avowal of anonymous self-love, when I say, that from the first idea of addressing them to you, I drew a flattering inference, that they are not utterly without foundation? Surely they can be only the sentiments of truth and justice, which, when let abroad, seek an home in the bosom of wisdom and virtue, as from the natural impulse of an original destination and kindred.

To make myself intelligible on the present state of the country, it is indispensibly necessary to look a little back. Individual man soon passes away, and the grave seems completely to disconnect him from the succeeding generation. But the public mind of every country has a longer continuity; and therefore, though the infancy, the manhood, and the old age of the individual, are embraced by a small number of years, the progress and state of the national intellect must sometimes be traced through as many centuries in order to be understood.

Of the single man,—the government of his conduct, or the remedies of his diseases, must be deduced from a knowledge of his age, his habits, and his temperaments.

With regard to nations, that previous knowledge is equally indispensable.

On this subject it is with regret that I carry your attention so far back as the Revolution of 1688; because it is with regret, that in looking to a period so glorious to England, I cannot, as an Irishman, shut my eyes upon some acts, and some actors, that do not inspire those sentiments with which we should ever wish to contemplate the memories of the dead. I approach it with the more reluctance, and shall dwell the more shortly and lightly upon it, because the review of such events is not always as well fitted to conciliate the present age as it may be to instruct the mind of posterity; and far is it from my present

purpose, if I cannot be a preacher of peace, to be a preacher of discord.

At that memorable æra, the bigotry, the tyranny, and the folly of the last of the Stuarts, bowed beneath the ascendancy of British genius and British fortune. The simplicity of Ireland, and let it not be forgotten, the simplicity of a too forgiving loyalty, forgot his crimes in his misfortunes, made a desperate effort in his cause, and perished in his ruin. But why do I say perish? She did not perish. She could not expire upon the sword; the last gasp that closes and cures the bitterness of death is denied to a nation:—She did not die; but she lived to feel, without exhausting, all the agony of dissolution; to be the spectatrix of her own funeral, and the conscious inhabitant of her own sepulchre.

James had blended his religion with his cause; the British nation blended it with his adherents, and thought a victory over one incomplete unless obtained over both. She thought that their punishments, like their crimes, ought to be the same; and did not recollect, that the proscription of a country is different from that of a king. What followed, who does not know, or who has not deplored?—Ireland was handed over to a legislature of vengeance and extermination. In the undistinguishing rage of reprisal and revenge, peace, liberty, commerce, industry, even religion and morals themselves, were successively sacrificed. The Irish Protestant thought he might sink the political bark to drown his Catholic ri-

val, and yet keep it afloat for himself;—he was mistaken, it went down equally to the bottom with both. The Irish Protestant was too warm to perceive, that he was made the blind instrument of a scheme, equally cruel and impolitic, of dividing Ireland into two parties, who should waste and destroy each other. He did not advert to this incontrovertible truth, that national prosperity, if made lower in any point, will sink in every other, and continue to do so till it has regained its level. He did not at the moment reflect, that while he was destroying the freedom of the great body of his countrymen, he was ruining his own. He did not reflect, how nearly the condition of the Gaoler approaches to the captivity of the Prisoner. Fatally for Ireland, these considerations, however obvious, were overlooked, and she was cast into the back-ground of the nations of the earth.

One word or two, and no more upon this subject. If Ireland weeps when she meditates on these catastrophes of the Revolution, let her find comfort in this: that to that great event may perhaps justly be ascribed the preservation of any liberty that remains to the human race. And if she finds her censure falling heavily on the actors in that scene, let her remember, that Great Britain had then to defend her religion, her constitution and her throne, against the claims of a Pretender, the ambition of France, and the intrigues of Rome. And if in these topics she still finds not so much to justify as to excuse, let her

learn herself to avoid that condemnation from the future age, which she feels herself obliged to pronounce upon the past.

Sir, I have always wondered, that in the succeeding period, when policy had time to think, and resentment to cool, that prudence, or justice, or compassion, should not have pleaded the cause of Ireland with the Sister Country, and pleaded it with some success. The gratitude of that celebrated William, to whose immortal memory so much Irish sobriety has been sacrificed, had crowned the glories of Aughrim and the Boyne, by the complete extinction of the staple manufacture of Ireland; the system of pains and penalties begun in his reign, was extended, and refined and sublimated under that of his successor, to a degree of deleterious perfection, that finds no parallel in the annals of civil mortality or legislative destruction. In 1715, the attempt which James made upon Britain presented an occasion that might have seduced the loyalty of any other people—but it only proved that of Ireland;—it seduced it not. Thirty years more elapsed,—a new rebellion was kindled in Great Britain, but the loyalty of Ireland seemed a virtue that dilated and grew under the weight of oppression, and she remained as inflexible in 1745, as she had been in 1715; but England continued obdurate and unappeased. Indeed by this time she became convinced, that there was no danger in treating Ireland ill; as was Ireland, that she had no hope of ever being

treated better ;—and both Countries seemed to agree in this idea, that it was the right of one to inflict without measure or mercy, and the duty of the other to suffer without resistance or complaint.

That England should have so reasoned and so acted, may perhaps be accounted for from the narrow jealousy of commercial rivalry, or the unfeeling and incorrigible indolence of unresisted oppression ; but that Ireland should have so suffered and so slept seems not quite so easily to be solved on the ordinary principles of human conduct. And here, Sir, when I say Ireland, I cannot be understood to mean the Catholics of Ireland :—That race of men had been long extinguished, and had given place to a new generation, under the well-known appellation of Irish Papists ; this term was far from alluding to any doctrine or tenet which they might have professed ; for the profession of tenets must be confined to men in whom the faculty of thinking and the power of adoption are not extinguished ; and the great multitude of that unhappy people had, by the dint of law, been long degraded to a state of actual barbarity, and were just as conversant in the doctrines of Confucius, or Zoroaster, as of Sixtus or Benedict. Papist had long been used to signify only a species of human game, set apart for the pastimes of orthodoxy and loyalty, and which they were authorized by law to hunt for their recreation.—I allude not, therefore, either to their sleep or their suf-

ferings—I allude solely to the Protestants of Ireland. It might have been expected, that those, when the heat of the conflict, and the shouts of triumph had subsided, might have coolly calculated the value of their trophies. If the Protestant landholder had done so, he would have found that freedom alone can sustain commerce and industry, and those only can sustain the value of land:—And he would have soon found, why in the solitary waste of uncultivated acres, he was poor and distressed. If the Protestant manufacturer had done so, he would have seen, that in barbarizing the great mass of a people their industry is destroyed; that with their industry is destroyed their consumption, because they must earn in order to consume; and with their consumption is annihilated the market in which his manufactures can find a purchaser:—And he would have soon found, that he was a beggar merely because he wished to be a monopolist.

If the religious zealot had done so, he would have found just as much subject for exultation as the former:—He would have learned, that religious opinions, or indeed any opinions, cannot be enforced by law. Law may procure a seeming conformity by the force of punishment or bribe, but he would feel that there was some difference between the interested apostacy of a renegado and the conversion of a proselyte;—he would have observed, that persecution is the unfailing missionary of error; and he might have

foreseen, what we now know to be the fact, That notwithstanding all the efforts of bribe or of punishment for a century past, the number of the Orthodox in Ireland is not a one fourth part of its inhabitants.

Let us not however, Sir, be supposed to think, that the virulence of religious or of civil antipathy continued to deform and degrade the Irish character with unabated malignity—thank Heaven it was not so. The instinct of social affection gained much ground upon the technical jargon of political or theological creeds. The Protestant master found his throat secure from the midnight dagger of the Catholic domestic.—The Catholic wife found protection in the arms of the Heretical husband.—He called her Papist, but slew her not. Mean time the Pontificate seemed to have got almost out of print in Italy; and it was observed, that the Irish Papist solicited no subscriptions for a new edition of his Holiness in Ireland. Next followed the political demise of his Eminency the Pretender. The Irish Jacobite found, upon enquiry, who his great-grand-father had been, but was not inconsolable for the fate of the Cardinal. All men began to suspect that their differences had been very foolish and very fatal; that the fomenters of them had been actuated by interest and fraud, and the followers by simplicity and passion; that the most zealous of the disputants commonly knew least of the subject. Nature by degrees assumed her sovereignty; and in the kind and social feelings of

the human heart, she gradually found a corrective and composer of the direful perversions and wanderings of the human understanding.

The enemies of Ireland were alarmed, and not without cause; her debasement could not very long survive her delirium; but their fears probably did not let them foresee the real length of the period that must interfere between the restoration of her intellect and her freedom. The cure of disease is much less slow than the return of health; time only can effect the latter. Exhausted as she had been, she could only hope for the renovation of her strength in a tardy and lingering convalescence. The inveterate habits of submitting to abuse were not to be flung off in a moment.

Perhaps it was necessary to exhibit the intemperance of British domination trampling on another country, to shew how much national injustice is to be abhorred—(in some minds sympathy is stronger than even actual sufferings).—It was perhaps necessary to exhibit that same intemperance trampled upon in its turn, in order to shew in what point and at what period it ceases to be formidable. If, Sir, that scheme of conciliating the American colonies, which recommended to Great Britain the wisdom of moderation and the mercy of public justice, and which alone would have secured you a place in the temple of eloquence and humanity, had been adopted, you would have defrauded your country of the benefit of that instructive exhibition; you would

have defrauded Washington of his laurels, and posterity of his name.—Of what you might have defrauded, or, from what you might have saved that unhappy region, which hath since become the theatre of so many horrors ;—from what you might have saved Great Britain ;—from what you might have saved Europe ;—from what you might have eventually saved the human race, time only can unfold to those who shall come after us. But the proposal was rejected ; and the Mother Country proceeded to enforce her parental claims with fire and sword, and by the slaughter of those whom she called her children. But the justice of heaven fought against her. Her fleets were baffled and dispersed ; her armies routed or captured, and America was free. The shouts of victory and freedom were borne across the wastes of the Atlantic ; the vibrations smote upon the cords of the half-strung harp, and the sleeping genius of Ireland awoke and kindled at the sound. The proud, but the humbled Britain, seemed like the bleeding highwayman, who escapes, and scarcely escapes, from the sword of the traveller, and retires to cure his wounds, and meditate some new plan of more effectual aggression. In plainer words, Sir, that great event was the harbinger of Irish redemption, the film was purged from the eyes of this country ; as if by enchantment it was purged away ; and we learned to distinguish men from gods by the infallible criterion of vice, and weakness and folly. During the course of that momentous struggle, there was full leisure

to discuss the motive of the attack and the principle of resistance.

Many men are of opinion, that no country ought in justice to submit to the tyranny of another, if able to resist it. In fact, the motive of the war was also coupled with the event; and as the former shewed how little an oppressor can be loved, the latter proved how little he need always be feared. The issue of that contest, as it usually does, decided the judgments of the great bulk of mankind, *sequitur fortunam et odit damnatos*, and a sentiment of the heart, too strong to be controlled, assumed the character of a maxim that was not to be questioned. You, Sir, must have observed, at how early a period of that war the people of this country began to regard the sister kingdom and herself in a point of view different from what she had ever done before. The demand of a free trade in 1779, was in a style that strongly marked the great change of sentiment and opinion with respect to England that was passing within her. Still it was the style of a people conscious of right, indignant at wrong, but not yet seeing, or not yet willing to see, the only avenue that could lead to redress. She felt her injuries, but she did not yet feel her strength. Perhaps she was too young a politician to know, that a nation can have no security of her right, but in the actual strength that can repel the invasion of it. Great Britain very kindly put her in the way of learning this last and important lesson. She left her to pro-

test herself against the French. We had read of the armed swarms that issued in the middle ages from the hives of the North, and probably suspected the historical truth of the narration;—but the sudden armament of Ireland shewed at least the possibility of the fact. The Volunteer army of that day was never computed at less than 100,000 men. Let me not, however, be supposed to compare the favours of their country in any thing but their promptitude and number, with those barbarous exundations of massacre and rapine:—Let me not be supposed to prophane the refined and generous spirit of the virtuous Caulfield, by a seeming comparison with the mercenary and unlettered ferocity of Hengist or of Alaric.

The apprehended invasion of France was at an end. I dare say Great Britain must have felt much pleasure in reflecting, that a power of internal defence can as practically be opposed to one injury as another; and that her sister kingdom was then in a frame of mind, and of body too, as unfavourable to the usurpation of her rights as to the invasion of her territory. It was impossible that her experience in America should not have directed her to Ireland; accordingly we find the latter march, without a blow, into those out-works of constitution, which had cost the United States a seven years expenditure of treasure and of blood. The judicial appeal to the Lords of England was given up.—The claim of binding us by the English parlia-

ment was given up, by the formal repeal of the act by which that absurd and unjust pretension had been asserted ; as well as by the solemn prospective renunciation of any such right for ever hereafter.

The political moral of this interesting æra would be lost, unless we reflected, that those Volunteers who redeemed this country were composed of all sects and persuasions of men, but far the greater number of Catholics. Within the limit of not many months, we saw Ireland divided, and weak and abused ;—and the same Ireland, united, and strong and redressed. What her distractions had lost, her conciliation had restored, and if this had not instructed her, what could have taught her ?

Perhaps Ireland did not exactly compute the value of what she gained—She asserted the great principle of her independence ; but the actual perception of its benefits could result only from a fair application of that principle in detail to the various departments of her system.—The body of the political cancer was extracted, but the roots and fibres remained to be explored and extirpated. This the great Emancipator of Ireland, so idolized and so defamed, clearly saw ; and he and those with whom he acted in what was called Opposition, accordingly prepared and brought forward those measures which alone could ripen or transfuse the abstract independence of Constitution, into the practical freedom and integrity of actual government. But in that generous

purpose how often have his wishes and his hopes been blasted!—This ill-fated land, after emerging from the baneful effects of barbarism and disunion, had a new foe to encounter in the odious form of corruption.

In 1785 corruption laboured to destroy what strength and wisdom had atchieved in 1780 and 1782; and nearly did that labour approach to success.—In that year Mr. Orde brought in his famous propositions; all men saw the necessity of some commercial arrangement between the two countries; the general principles of the arrangement, as stated to the Irish parliament, appeared to be fair; the then minister of Ireland emphatically promised that he would not assent to the change of a single iota of them by Great Britain; the British minister, however, with that gentlemanly fairness and candour of dealing so consistent with his character, did introduce an addition to them, by which the independence of the Irish Legislature was to be renounced for ever. These very Irish ministers, who had in 1779 resisted the free trade, supported this intended suicide of their country; and to the honour of Mr. Ponsonby, let it never be forgotten, that he was the honest Abdiel who disdained the apostate array, and to whose integrity this island was indebted for her escape. Strange and unnatural escape!—The escape of the Irish people from the resolution of a majority of the Irish House of Commons!

Ireland now clearly saw the points of her weakness and her danger. Her weakness was in her representation—her danger in the utter want of all responsible government. That a reform in that representation was, and must be the only remedy of the former, it would be almost as ridiculous to prove as to deny; but the latter has not been so frequently discussed, and may therefore justify some little explanation.

By the British Constitution the administration or government of the state is vested in the crown, to be exercised through the medium of ministers, who alone are responsible for the acts of that administration. Mr. Pope was perhaps a poet only when he thought the forms of government a contest only for fools, but he certainly would have been right in thinking, that unless well administered, the best form is but a barren letter. For this good administration Great Britain has two securities; one of a vindictive, the other of a preventive nature: the first in the responsibility of the minister,—the latter, and far the better, the influence of the people. Of this, Ireland has no knowledge, from her own experience, for the last century; having scarcely had a people during that period, and having never had any responsible administration. But in England where both exist, it is well known, that the wishes of the people, when so general as to deserve that name, has a force that cannot be controlled; well may be said, "*vox populi vox dei*," it is a voice of more than human authority;—and so it

should always be: it is the voice of those for whom governments, and those who administer them, were made. It may be sometimes the voice of prejudice or mistake, but it is ever the voice of a principle, not always found inseparable from ministers, of integrity, without exception or blemish. It is, however, a local, or rather it is a domestic voice; it is prompted, and speaks, and is heard only at home.—Every nation, like every individual, thinks with preference of herself, and with some jealousy of a competitor.—What follows? A consequence founded in man's nature, and which, therefore, to state, is no peculiar imputation on the liberality of England:—the popular influence of that country must ever operate to the disadvantage of this, as it has ever done. The monarch sees it, and will respect it; the minister feels it, and dares not contemn it. It forms that great bulwark of British freedom, without which it could not subsist for a single year. But how does that influence act for Ireland? Not at all. It is not laughed at, because it is too distant to be heard, and too insignificant to be enquired after. Ireland, therefore, has no popular current preventively influencing in her favour; but, on the contrary, an opposite and an eternal current setting against her. What then remains? Has she the vindictive control? Can she bring the minister who should be guilty of malversation to punishment by impeachment? No doubt, Sir, if he could be prevailed on to present the articles of impeachment himself. But,

I suspect, that his porter might be ordered to tell the supplicants that his master was not at home, or was too busy,—to be hanged.

But is this mere theory? Alas, Sir, you well know it is not. You well know that her past abasement, her past sufferings, her present difficulties, and her present discontents, all prove it to be too fatally a fact. It may be laid down as a maxim, which no rational mind can refuse, that until Irish affairs shall be conducted by ministers residing, and having their property, in Ireland, so as to be thereby responsible to, and under the influence of the people, the interests of the nation must continue to be sacrificed to the prejudices of Great Britain, to the ignorance, or the ambition of her ministers; or, perhaps more probably, to the rapacity of such minions as their caprices may fling into authority over us.

In this point of view did the gentlemen in Opposition see this subject.—The diseases were obvious,—the remedies were equally so, and their unceasing efforts were directed to attain them; namely, a system of legal responsibility in the administration, and a reform in the representation of the people. The first of those great objects was pursued with the most zeal; it was the most pressing in necessity, and was precedent to the second in the order of things. The law by which any man is to act, and upon the breach of which he is to be arraigned, is prior to the tribunal before which he is to be tried. The system of responsibility is that law.—The people,

adequately represented, are that tribunal.—Without both, either would be nothing ;—with both, Ireland would have passed from the state of a province to that of a nation.—England would have lost a slave and acquired a friend.

Corruption saw her existence at stake, and borrowed courage from despair.—She fought *pro aris et focis*. The Pretorians were arrayed, and the donative divided, and a greater promised. She had generously given half a million before to beat down an Opposition ;—to beat them down now could not be less in merit or in reward ; two-and-twenty new parliamentary places, Peerages in showers, Lords deified, and Commoners lorded, silenced the reproaches of shame, or the suggestions of fear, and strung the nerves of honourable adventure.

The event was what might have been foreseen.—Corruption was victorious ;—her throne was reassured, and it has not been rumoured that her promises to her followers were not faithfully performed.

To you, Sir, who are so well acquainted with both kingdoms, these facts cannot be stated without bringing the persons concerned in them to your mind. I have, however, studiously avoided all harsh allusion to individuals ; a man who does not put his name to what he writes, ought not, in honour, to engross the advantage of concealment. My object is to give some sketch of the progress of Ireland, from the latter end of the last century to that of the present, in order to dis-

cover the causes of her present agitations, and to point out the treatment most likely to compose them, and thereby secure a connection that is more than ever necessary to the two countries; and that is an object that can borrow no honest aid from personal invective. Let us, therefore, if I have not already worn out your patience with these hasty and desultory observations, resume the subject.

For a session or more, this country seemed not as interested as might be expected in discussions that so nearly concerned her. What one impression could not do, repetition effected. She perceived she was the subject of debate, but she felt that her influence upon it was nothing. Her rights and her wrongs were talked of, but the words seemed merely to be used as counters, by which the chances and progress of the game were marked. The sound of the word PEOPLE struck frequently upon her ear, and her attention was at last excited to enquire what it meant. She found, that in England it signified a vast aggregate of men, characterized by their rights, their powers, and their enjoyments. She found that here it meant a distracted and degraded populace, marked only by their wrongs, their debility, and their privations. She felt that her own folly had been the instrument and the cause of the shameful contrast, and determined to repair whatever was not yet irreparable. The Catholic Petition was presented:—Corruption rallied again, and the Petition was flung over the

bar of the House of Commons. That important, and loyal, and abused body of our fellow-subjects, felt the outrage as they ought:—they carried their second Petition to the throne. The answer was worthy of a king. The parliament caught the generous sympathy; as if by the magic touch of royalty it was cured in a moment of its bigotry, and granted, unanimously, what it had almost unanimously refused. It gave a notable instance of the quickness of its genius, and the docility of its nature. It shewed how closely connected it was with the people; and how austere independent of the Crown. But, Sir, to speak without irony, I'll tell you what it shewed:—It shewed that the intolerance which could be brought to work as a day-labourer for payment, might be a temporal hireling, but could not, without mockery, be called a Religious Enthusiast. It shewed, that the pretended anxiety for the Protestant Church was a mere grimace, assumed for the personal benefit of men who were perfectly indifferent about every church and every religion.—Hypocrisy and falsehood became for once the missionaries of truth; and the nation became as rapidly the convert of the parliament, as the parliament had been of the crown. From that hour the jargon of Protestant Ascendancy, of the danger of the Protestant Constitution in Church and State, became the subjects of generous indignation, of candid shame, but never once more of serious disputation.

Those to whom the faculty of Lord Westmoreland had devolved the Irish government, found themselves detected and despised. They had opposed the Catholic claim with a virulence that nothing but the recency of their own conversion could account for.—The principal of them had but newly discovered, and therefore only, no doubt, abjured the errors of their ancestors; and they thought the best proof of the sincerity of their profelytism was the persecution of those they had deserted.—They had used their power with too marked a contempt and hatred of the people, particularly of the Catholics, not to be themselves much hated, and in truth not a little feared. It would have been perhaps fortunate for the public quiet, if their severity had been tempered with that sort of dignity that imposes respect much oftener than it deserves it; but this they did not possess; and their oppressions carried with them as strong a sense of ridicule as of pain.

If those men had condescended to pay any regard to the wise, paternal, and conciliatory motives that guided the conduct of our most excellent Sovereign; if they had considered for a moment the critical state of Ireland, and of the British empire, with Europe in a blaze about us, and a thousand incendiaries ready for every occasion of flinging the combustion and spreading it amongst us, they would have felt themselves bound in common honesty to let those laws, which then passed in favour of the Catholics,

produce their intended and natural effect :—Of uniting them with their country, and reconciling them to its government. But they adopted a conduct much more suitable to their own wishes, and their own gratification. The artillery of the press was opened upon them. Speeches, paragraphs, anecdotes, histories of plots, conspiracies, and treasons, teemed in every newspaper ; and the mild and merciful spirit of the Protestant Church was supported with all the virulence and rancour of invective and defamation. But the plots of newspapers were thought too unimpressive for any salutary purpose of deception ; and grave and secret enquiries were instituted for the investigation of Popish conspiracies.—Many Catholics were seized, examined, and insulted, but nothing was discovered except the folly and malignity of the research. The treason, however, that could not be found out, was thought, for that very reason, the more formidable ;—and prosecution was dispatched upon a voyage of discovery. Some of the most respectable men in Ireland, (if they had not unfortunately been Catholics,) were torn from their families, and after languishing for months in dungeons, under charges for which bail was refused, were brought to trial upon the evidence of the vilest and most abandoned of the human species, and acquitted without calling even a single witness in their defence.

But persecution is not easily to be wearied or abashed. A set of unfortunate wretches, such as every country must be infested with, whose in-

dustry is prevented from giving them employment, had committed some very atrocious outrages not many miles from the metropolis. This was new game most fortunately started. And these miserable ruffians, who knew no religion, and who hated all law; who had forfeited their lives by common theft and common robbery, were ennobled by the imputed character of state offenders, and were brought to the gibbet dressed in the pompous trappings, and with all the mock solemnity of political martyrdom. These unhappy exhibitions were continued till humanity became sick of the repetition of cruelty and folly.—In one year only, the expences of prosecuting these wretches amounted to forty thousand pounds. If one fourth of that sum had been judiciously laid out in giving them food or employment, how much scandal, and how much blood, might have been spared!—At this moment the Catholics, thus slandered, prosecuted, and studiously defrauded of the benefit of the laws made for their relief, had one consolation: their cause was now clearly understood to be that of the people of Ireland; the malice of their enemies was clearly seen through; religion disclaimed all share in the dispute, and one simple question remained:—Whether Ireland should be a people, or continue a prey to its avowed and inveterate enemies?

It may be generally observed, that the animosity of parties is founded much more in sentiment than in real diversity of opinion. Specula-

tion is laborious. Feeling costs no labour. Hence it is, that party distinctions die away, not because the opinion is refuted, but because the sentiment of animosity is at an end, or is diverted to some other object. When reason acts at all, it is for the most part only to approve of what was done without her assistance, and to celebrate the victory which she would affect to have acquired. Yet the visit that she pays, though too late to effect a cure, may be useful in preventing a relapse. This was eminently exemplified in the present subject. The Catholic was disliked by the Protestant; he was abhorred by the Presbyterian.—The latter sentiment sunk under its own violence; and it was not unpleasant to see the severity of the Presbyterian interpose as a peace-maker between the Catholic and the Protestant. They had differed without cause; they were reconciled without argument. In the warmth of their hearts they would each have sacrificed his claim; but alas! it was soon found that none had any essential claim to relinquish.—And they were surprized to find, that the only pledge of peace that remained to them was, an union of their forces against the common enemy of all.

I said that reason may prevent a relapse into discord. It was exactly the time for the parties to consider the merits of their late dispute; and a favourable opportunity was not wanting.—Pamphlets and speeches were industriously published in England and Ireland, containing the substance of all that had been ever said or written

upon the matter :—You, Sir, I dare say, must have seen them ; and whatever regret they might have raised by the misapplication of what little talent they shewed, you must have felt some pleasure in foreseeing, that however it may have been intended to act as a poison, it could operate only as a salutary bitter to fortify where it was intended to corrode.—The authors of those publications could not abstain, unfortunately for their own purpose, from very unbecoming invectives against the persons of those who had opposed their principles and their designs. The general indignation was roused by the audacity of these attacks. Who could preserve his temper, when he saw such a man as Dr. Law, one of the first scholars and the most learned divines in Europe ; and what soars beyond the reach of learning, or of talents, a man of that cordial and attractive philanthropy, which, in whatever region destiny might have placed him, would mark him as the brother and the friend of man. Who, I say, could preserve his temper, and see such a man held up to the public as a dunce and a traitor ? Who could avoid the comparison between the aspersers and the aspersed ? Men were weighed against men, and doctrine against doctrine ; and it required not much feeling or discernment, to give to wisdom and humanity their merited respect ; or to dictatorial ignorance and insolence, their condign abhorrence.

Sir, I have been attempting to trace the causes which, through a succession of years, matured or

disturbed the mind of this country into its present most alarming disposition; among them we must not omit the Revolution in France. The commencement of those extraordinary events that at once interested and inflamed the feelings of Ireland. At that early period, it was beheld as a struggle between liberty and power; and the sentiments of sympathy, from a supposed analogy of condition, had made too deep and too early an impression here, to be effaced by all the horrors and excesses that ensued in that unhappy nation. If they had been effaced, or even weakened, the present war could not be so unpopular with all ranks and descriptions of men as it had notoriously been. But the grand and paramount cause which put every other into action, or kindled it into flame, was to be found in the actual government of the country. That identical set of gentlemen, who opposed our free trade in 1779,—who laboured to surrender our independence to Britain in 1785,—who actually surrendered it at the regency,—who barefacedly invaded the charter of the metropolis,—who decided that a peaceable calling of the freeholders by their sheriff was an attachable offence,—who had defiled the purity of both houses of parliament, by the sacrilegious ennoblement of plebeian venality, and the avowed truck of the honors of one against the integrity of the other,—who held our commerce under the joint subjection of British monopoly and Irish revenue,—those same men who kept their power in Ireland

by deceiving England ; who were trusted by one, merely because they were detested by the other ; and who courted that very detestation as the bail and security of their servility :—those very men were permitted to torture the feelings, and to alienate the affections of the people ; to confound the idea of English government with their own persecutions ;—to debase the stamp of majesty by the vileness of their counterfeit ; and take even the semblance of a crown from the representation of their king.—Those men were continued by the fatal infatuation of their patron, as if for the purpose of uniting Ireland with herself, and severing her from the empire.

If I were to appeal to parliamentary declarations, or to the official proclamations that have the public sanction of government, I must have given a very different picture indeed of Ireland from what I have done :—They have represented us as traitors armed for rebellion, and ready to open our gates to any enemy of Britain.—They have defamed us by such representations.—They stated the natural effects as the real consequences of their crimes.—They would have stated what was strictly true, had they stated that the minister of Britain was trifling most wantonly, and dangerously, with a most valuable member of the empire :—That if he could not bring himself to sacrifice the paltry gratification of his well-known personal pique to Ireland, to the solid interests of his country, Ireland might be forever lost.—That although there was not either

insurrection or rebellion amongst us, yet that we were in a most critical situation ;—that the most moderate were discontented ; that the best men were dejected, and the worst elated ;—that much loyalty remained unshaken, but that disaffection too wanted neither preachers nor proselytes :—Finally, that we were in that state, in which the danger and distraction excited by an ignorant and intemperate government, might be yet composed or averted, by a salutary adoption of wiser councils, and a seasonable mixture of firmness and moderation.

Such, Sir, do I consider the situation of Ireland to have been in July last, when the Duke of Portland accepted a share in your administration. His character and his virtues had been long regarded here with a peculiar veneration.—We believed that his Grace had taken the Irish department for the express purpose of healing our grievances, and reforming our abuses. Our hopes were additionally raised, when we understood that Lord Fitzwilliam had been prevailed on to accept our government. His great name, his hereditary virtue, his polished and cultivated talents, his love of liberty and of science, and his known commiseration of our sufferings, had given him a sort of tutelary consecration in Ireland ; and those hopes were completely confirmed, by his early resorting to the councils of those in whom we placed the most unlimited confidence ;—of Mr. Grattan and Mr. Ponsonby.—The former had devoted his whole life to the

cause of his country; the latter, tho' the head of a great Protestant family, had shewn himself superior to the prejudices of party, or of religion, and was the steady friend of Catholic emancipation. Tho' possessing a great interest in the present state of our representation, he nobly proposed to sacrifice that interest to a reform in Parliament. Men who can despise the allurements of ease, and wealth, and power, and pride, when opposed to their public duty, deserve the public confidence.

From such a combination of will and of power, of wisdom and of virtue, it cannot surely be wondered at, notwithstanding the sad reverse and disappointment to which that hope was destined, that Ireland, to a man, did embrace the hope of peace, of safety, of redress, and of renovation. Sir, I know it has been boldly asserted, that such hopes were raised only by rashness, and were quelled, as they ought to be, by a most timely and necessary interference.—I know, Sir, your noble friend has been charged with having abused his powers; and his advisers here with having abused his confidence; and both are accused of having raised a spirit that it may be impossible to lay. Whether Lord Fitzwilliam did, or did not, exceed the powers with which Mr. Pitt or the Duke of Portland thought fit to invest him as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland? is a question which it would not be respectful to such great names to pass by wholly unnoticed; but it is less than nothing when compared with this:—Did

Lord Fitzwilliam, while he remained in his government, exercise his authority in such a manner as can justify a wise and good man at the tribunal of his country? It is upon this ground only, that posterity will pronounce upon his Lordship and his friends, for what they have done; and upon this country, for the part it has taken, or may hereafter take.

To investigate this great question, you must consider the necessary objects of a wise and good man in his situation.—England was engaged in a war distressing to her resources and her population, and disastrous beyond the example of any former age; a war carried on by France, by the united efforts of seduction and force; that the former had neither been unemployed, nor unsuccessful here, every body knew—when, or with what event the latter might be tried, no man could foresee. The first object, therefore, of a wise or good governor was, to consult for the security of the empire, by conciliating and confirming the affections of Ireland; and by animating and directing her exertions in her own and the general defence. On the value of the Irish alliance and co-operation, a word or two may not be amiss. It is a point of view in which those who have betrayed and disgraced her are ever ready to defame her; but her value cannot be misunderstood by any man who knows, that her population is now nearer to five than to four millions of inhabitants; that the wealth of Britain is fattened upon

the monopoly of our trade, and by the drain of our absentees;—that her manufactures are supplied by our agriculture;—that her fleets and armies are manned by our people, and fed with our provisions;—that our local and maritime advantages are such, as secure her safety while she possesses them, as would make her destruction inevitable if she lost them.

This is the country whose co-operation Lord Fitzwilliam had to secure; but to do that, he had also to conciliate our affections.—How was that to be done? By removing the causes that had weakened or seduced them. Was one of those causes to be found in the state of the Catholics? A great wall had separated them from their Protestant brethren. Was that wall a barrier that excluded the Protestant from the social aid and comfort of his Catholic brother; or guarded him against the jealousy and violence of his Catholic enemy? If the former, it ought to be prostrated; if the latter, to be repaired. Upon this great question then, Lord Fitzwilliam had to decide. Was the Catholic to be admitted completely within the constitution? Was it just? Was it safe? Was it at that time necessary to do so?

As to its justice; was it just to relieve a man from punishment who had never been guilty of a crime? Or was it just to continue the sufferings of patience under calamity, and loyalty under oppression? Was it just to the public, to call upon the general strength and general talent for their contribution to the general service? Was

it just to reclaim so large a tract of the human soil from barrenness, or from poisonous fertility, into a state of healthy and salutary production? But justice and safety may not always be the same. And was it safe to trust the Catholic with property or power in the state?

On the first of these points the experiment had been made. In 1778 a bill was brought in to give the Catholics a power of taking some interest in land;—and a further power was proposed, and granted, in 1782. On that occasion, the the danger of such a measure was resounded in and out of parliament; and the cause of bigotry and folly were not far from prevailing; but, fortunately for Ireland, they found an opponent. A man peculiarly qualified for the occasion;—too honest to be the tool or the sycophant of a party; too wise to be the dupe or the sycophant of a sect; too firm to be borne down by the violence of either.—His ideas of justice, deduced from a sound and informed understanding, and his feelings of humanity from a warm and benevolent heart.—Familiar with the language and the learning of Athens and of Rome, he had been enabled to draw the maxims of a pure and classic christianity directly from those fountains, where the first followers of the Cross drank the clear and unadulterated waters of science and immortality. Such was the advocate for truth and justice, which his country found in the person of the Lord Chief Baron Yelverton:—his eloquence prevailed, the bill was adopted, and the experi-

ment was made. And what has been the result of that experiment? The confirmation of his opinion, that poverty is a weapon much oftener than it is a chain; and that property is the most unfailing security for allegiance.

But did Lord Fitzwilliam want more authorities to convince him of the safety of this measure, he had them in the conduct of the British cabinet, and of the preceding Irish administration.—If it was unsafe, why did they expose him to the danger of being deluded by the example of their own political indiscretion? If then, Sir, it was both safe and just to give complete and perfect emancipation to the Catholics of Ireland, Lord Fitzwilliam was, upon those grounds, abundantly warranted in his intentions on that subject. But his Lordship was too wise not to see, that the measure was as necessary as it was just. He could not but know, that in the present state of Ireland, it could not with safety be refused.

I have troubled you more on this part of Lord Fitzwilliam's administration, or rather of his intentions, than would have been necessary on so very plain a matter, if it had not been made the topic of much misrepresentation, and assigned as the cause of his Lordship's recall. I cannot help repeating, that I think there is no candid man who knows any thing of Ireland, and of the character and principles of Lord Fitzwilliam, but must admit, that a contrary conduct, with respect to Ireland, would have been most inconsistent with his character and his principles.

Shall we return, Sir, to enquire by what means a wise and good man, in the place of Lord Fitzwilliam, would have proceeded to conciliate the affections of Ireland? I should imagine, by the reform of abuses, and the completion of their constitution.

When I name abuses, I feel how forcibly I must turn your attention to the revenue of Ireland, and the scandal of its management. You, Sir, well know the system of its speculation and its profusion, its indolence and its exertion, its connivance and its persecution, its favour and its hostility; the tyrant of the merchant, the patron of the informer; the bawd of the constituent, and the pandor of the representative.—But I will not dilate upon its horrors;—I will suggest only one question:—could an honest governor of Ireland permit such a Pandemonium to continue? Lord Fitzwilliam was shocked at its profanations; he had degraded the priests, and ordered the temple to be erased.—And this is the second alledged cause of his Lordship's recall. How far it was just to sacrifice a system of so mean and rancorous a tyranny, to the wrongs and interests of five millions of people, my Lord Fitzwilliam must answer; how far it was just or wise to reinstate that tyranny over a great people, grateful for its emancipation, and exulting in its deliverance, is a question which Mr. Pitt probably despises this country too much to answer. But the consequences of that reinstatement the dullest capacity must perceive: the constitution

and the commerce, but particularly the Catholic commerce of Ireland, is reconsigned to the dungeon.

I have been led even in the little I have said of abuses, to go further than I intended. The severities of disease are recounted with pleasure at the crisis of recovery;—but different is the sentiment of reviewing them at the moment of relapse. Sure I am, it is not for the consolation of Ireland, much I doubt if it be for her tranquillity, to dwell much upon this subject.

I said a virtuous Lord Lieutenant of Ireland would endeavour to conciliate her affections, by completing her constitution. I know, Sir, many at your side of the water would ask, and with some surprize, if Ireland has not the same constitution with Great Britain? An Irishman would hang his head when he answered the question. He would think, with shame, of his ancestors and of himself, when he answered, that his country has the same right to the full benefit of that constitution, but has never had any thing like it in possession. The residence of the monarch, and the government in England, is a fund of constitutional resource to the people, for which no law could be an equivalent; and that, independent of the circumstance of Great Britain's being for that reason the arbiters of all imperial questions, the centre of the state, and the political heart of the empire. But this is an advantage both in dignity and power, that flows from local and invariable causes; and to which therefore

Ireland ought, perhaps to submit, without complaint. But great should be her compensation for such disadvantages. As a member of the empire, she is, and must continue to be, nothing.—On the great questions of treaty or alliance, or peace or war, she is, and must continue to be, nothing. The policy of the empire perhaps, requires this relinquishment; but what policy can require the relinquishment of internal constitution? and see, Sir, for a moment, our internal constitution compared with that of Great Britain: In Britain, the issue, the expenditure, and the account of every shilling of your immense revenue are regulated by inexorable law:—In Ireland it is not so.—In Britain, those administrators of your Finances who are immediately answerable to parliament for their conduct, are excluded from your Commons:—In Ireland, so far from being excluded, they are the principal of that assembly.—In Britain you have ministers controlled by the influence of the people, and their responsibility to parliament: in Ireland, the public has no such security.—In Britain, your commerce is free; every man may apply his money and his labour as he thinks best; and has a certain market at home or abroad for the produce: In Ireland, commerce can scarcely be said to exist. Prohibited from our own market by the absurd injustice of law, or the infatuated vanity of our own people; we are almost reduced to a very restricted export of one single manufacture, of which how great a portion of the price sinks

into the luxuries of absentees, without a shilling of it returning into this country! unless we are to count the indulgence of raising corn for your manufacturers, or feeding cattle for the provision of your fleets,—or rearing an unfortunate race of human stock to be exported from their country, to supply the consumption of your wars. To this detail of misery and oppression, I will add only another item: In Britain the people are represented in parliament: in Ireland, we find a more honourable constituent in your minister of the day. To this detail you, Sir, well know, how easy it would be to add; but I confine myself to those flagrant and crying abuses of Irish government, and those degradations of Irish constitution, which Lord Fitzwilliam was determined to correct. And here I would appeal to the justice and magnanimity of the British nation. At the worst period of the reign of James II. that people possessed a perfect freedom, compared with the present actual state of Ireland, and its government; yet is it her boast to have appealed to heaven against the tyrant, and to have vindicated her rights even at the hazard of war and revolution. I would ask that generous people then, upon what principle it is that they can wish for the captivity of Ireland? or is it in Britons only that the love of freedom is a virtue? But, Sir, perhaps I am coming too near the brink of a precipice that cannot be approached without danger. Let us return coolly to the subject.

I stated to you the abuses which Lord Fitzwilliam had resolved to reform. I had already stated the two great objects of his administration; namely, to secure the attachment and co-operation of Ireland. And here I may apply what I said of the Catholics to the whole nation; the abuses of the country were understood and felt by every class and description of men; so were clearly the modes by which they had been supported, and the purposes to which they were applied. The agents of those purposes by whom the nation had been drained, and sold, and slandered, were too low and too near the people in rank and talent, not to be perfectly legible. Oppression may make a wise man mad, it may sometimes make a mad man wise; in Ireland it did so; she saw and felt the ignominy of her sufferings; and reason and passion concurred in her determination to put an end to her bondage. Lord Fitzwilliam, and those with whom he acted, knew Ireland too well not to know this to have been the fact. They plainly saw the crisis had arrived, in which by delay all would be hazarded, and by refusal irrecoverably lost. If they had not learned this from their intimate acquaintance with the people, they they must have seen it in the instantaneous rejection of religious distinction, and the almost miraculous coalition of all sects and parties. Such concentrations of force are never made, but when they are preparatory to some great intended effort that requires them. Lord Fitzwilliam, I say, therefore, in his proposed reform

adopted that conduct which his name demanded; which the state of Ireland required; which the safety of the empire exacted from his wisdom and his virtues.—I said his virtues; will his Lordship excuse a man who wishes not to pilfer from his fame, if I retract that expression: where there is no choice there can be little praise for virtue. The worst man, with an equal understanding, must have adopted the same conduct with Lord Fitzwilliam; in this only would the difference have lain: a good man only could have pursued it with the same effects.

I may be asked, what were those effects? I answer, the complete attainment of both objects of his mission;—I answer, the most rapid transition from ferment to composure of the public mind.—The most miraculous oblivion of her resentments, and the most unexampled exertions in the cause of the empire. The pride too of the nation rose with her strength, her union and her loyalty.—Learning was cheared in the well-earned advancement of Murray.—Religion called her scattered and affrighted virtues together, and put them for protection under the wing of Newcombe.—Nor had justice cause to complain that she was forgotten: already did she anticipate the accession of dignity and authority in the unsophisticated learning, and the impracticable integrity, of her Yelverton.—But let me not dilate upon the splendors of a scene that has disappeared, perhaps for ever. Whether the untimely termination of his career may not have been fortunate for his glory,

I will not pretend to say. A longer course could certainly have added little to it;—that termination has put it beyond the reach of calumny or mischance; and he has left Ireland with a claim upon the truth of history to confess, that in the course of a few days; he has acquired a juster title to the character of a benefactor to this nation, to the empire of Britain, and the line of her kings, than any preceding governor in the longest course of administration:—As to Ireland, let him not suppose that she can be oblivious or ungrateful; while her memory lives, his name will be most dear to it:

———— Salve æternum mihi, maxime Palla,
Æternumque vale.

———— Hei mihi, quantum
Præsidium, Ausonia, et quantum tu perdis, Iule!

Sir, I have troubled you with a great number of facts and observations, thrown hastily and loosely together, by a person sufficiently anxious to do more justice to the subject, but possessing neither time nor talent for more correct or connected arrangement. I cannot, however, but hope, that you will think these facts and observations a sufficient foundation for the conclusion I have endeavoured to build upon them; namely, that the present state of Ireland, and of the empire, demanded, and, therefore justified, the line of conduct which Lord Fitzwilliam and his Irish friends have pursued, while he was permitted to

remain in the government; and having done so, I should trespass on your patience no longer, if, upon this subject, the grossest outrage perhaps ever offered to a country, had not been followed by the most unblushing misrepresentation of persons and of facts.

It has been asserted, that Lord Fitzwilliam transgressed the powers committed to him. It would be foolish and presumptuous in an anonymous writer to oppose even mere assertion by mere contrary assertion; I cannot, however, but observe, that the charge has been by the highest authority denied to be true; and if that denial could require any confirmation, I think it would find it in the plain probability of the thing.

That the Duke of Portland undertook the Irish department, with the express purpose of reforming its abuses, I believe has never been denied; that Lord Fitzwilliam accepted the government upon the same terms, and that Mr. Grattan and Mr. Ponsonby were, upon that ground only, induced to take a share in his Lordship's administration, have never, that I have learned, been even questioned.—The accusation, therefore, comes shortly to this: Mr. Pitt and the Duke of Portland sent his Lordship to Ireland for the avowed purpose of reforming her abuses;—but neither of them gave his Lordship the power of effecting such reformation. There is, in my mind, as little prudence as there is sense or modesty in this style of talking. And the world will think it much more probable, that Mr. Pitt should

violate an engagement, than that Lord Fitzwilliam, or Mr. Ponsonby, or Mr. Grattan, should do what was grossly foolish, or assert what was grossly false. But be the stipulation of those powers as it might, the outrage upon this country is equally flagrant and indefensible. The first act of Lord Fitzwilliam, on his arrival, was to apprise the people of those intended reforms. The necessary changes in office were actually made in pursuance of those declarations; stated by him personally to the parliament. The parliament and the people were all gratitude for them. I ask, did not Mr. Pitt, by his silence, ratify the promises of Lord Fitzwilliam to this country? But when did Mr. Pitt complain? Not until Ireland, upon the faith of those promises, had passed a supply which it would have been phrenzy in her to grant upon any other condition, than the redress of their grievances. It was then, and not before, that Ireland was informed that her emancipation had been promised without authority;—that she was to have no emancipation; and that she was to be remanded to the custody of those masters from whom she had been daring enough to attempt an escape. The consequences of those unfeeling insults upon us, I know, Sir, you must have learned, and, I am sure, you have deeply regretted. Nor can you be surprised at the agitation of a people, with all their passions already afloat, and precipitated in a moment from redemption to desperation;—the cup dashed from their lips before it well was tasted, and contu-

macionously dashed by the hand of an enemy. Even the last consolation of the wretched, the hope of happier times, is denied to us by the tyrants who are now replaced over our necks. We are confidently assured by them, that the relief of our Catholic brethren is impossible without violating the Coronation Oath. Whether these men are jealous of the veneration with which the person of the king has been uniformly regarded by this country;—whether they wish to involve every department of the government in the same detestation with themselves; or whether they choose to act by any delegation from the Convention of France, I cannot decide. But sure I am, that what little tranquillity remains among us, is owing to the small degree of credit that can be claimed by any thing those men assert. If our people could be once assured, that their king was bound by the abominable obligation of abusing his negative to the resistance of their deliverance, I will not say what my countrymen would do. I will not affect to ominate meanly and despicably of them; but I cannot help observing, that every human appeal would be taken away, and that the last dreadful alternative alone could remain;—of suffering like slaves, or of acting like men. For my own part, Sir, I am apt to believe, that this is no more than an idle tale, invented and propagated by their folly. That the oath which the king takes, merely as the executive magistrate; in a capacity completely distinct from, and subordinate to, the legislative, should be construed

to take away any exercise whatsoever of his judgment, as a third estate of parliament, is a flight of folly which I could not presume to attribute to the high characters who are vouched in its support on your side of the water, unless I had some better authority than I have at present for such an imputation. As to the substance of the assertion, that the calumnies of our enemies may have made some fatal impression upon the royal mind, against the merit and sufferings of a patient and loyal people, sorry am I to say, that we know not well what to oppose to the triumph of those enemies, who boast, that our most dutiful petitions have been rejected as presumptuous or criminal, and that the father of his people has turned away his face for ever from us. We do not feel, Sir, that we have deserved this treatment. We do not feel, that when we are stabbed to the heart, there is either any disloyalty or any insolence in our bleeding.

Sir, we have suffered much from oppression; we have suffered much by the misrepresentations of our oppressors. To be delivered from the former, and to be justified against the latter, are indispensibly necessary to our liberties and our character. You will not, therefore, I trust, think it impertinent to the present subject, if I subjoin a few observations, first on our situation and our objects; as an individual people; next with relation to the minister of Britain, and those who now act under him in Ireland; and, lastly, with respect to the sister nation. It is only by plac-

ing her in these different points of view, and considering them candidly and equally, that any judgment can be formed of the motives of her action, or the grounds of her justification.

As to the first; of Ireland as an individual. I have accidentally used a word, when I said individual, that is itself a volume. Never was there an age, or nation, to which the term could more justly be applied in its full extent. A century ago, she consisted of one million of divided, and most adversely divided, persons.—Today she consists of more than four times that number, in whom every sense of religious, or party distinction, is extinct, or absorbed in the sense of common suffering and of general oppression. If to this an exception can be alledged, it is only of a few, who are marked as they ought by their country, who wish again to repair the mouldering idol of civil discord with the vilest clay which the earth can produce; and to steal from hell the only fire that can give it action or animation. Ireland had sacrificed the country to her parties, it was full time to sacrifice those parties to the country; and she is now standing at the altar where the sacrifice has been made; and where her sons, in the awful presence of heaven, have plighted the solemn and irrevocable vow, that as they are brothers of the same family, and children of the same God, so they will acknowledge only one common cause, and in that cause they will stand or fall together.

If any man now, Sir, should tell you, that

maxims of government need not, and must not, bend to such changes of times and characters, perhaps you might smile at his simplicity; sure I am, you would recollect, and not without regret, the number of governments which have perished, merely because their rulers had not sagacity to discern those changes, though often brought about by their own folly, or their vices; or good sense to see, that a change of regimen becomes necessary to a change of constitution.

Secondly; of this country with relation to the British minister. Ireland is no stranger to the splendid talents of Mr. Pitt:—But I should fall into the meanest hyprocrisy if I did not add, that Ireland is not disposed to place much confidence in his good faith; and that this sentiment of distrust is increased by the idea, that he has suffered himself to be carried away by a splenetic and personal sort of asperity towards her, unworthy of a great minister. His having got into his present situation, under the mere favour of the crown, and in defiance of the people, has not inspired her with any very high notion of his respect for the constitution of Great Britain; and the uniform conduct of his administration has convinced her, that he is an enemy to ours. Two or three of his attacks upon it have nearly proved fatal. She does firmly, I will not say with what foundation, believe, that Mr. Pitt was the sole author of the late unparalleled imposture and outrage that have been practised upon her.—But, Sir, upon a personal sub-

ject I shall dwell no longer; upon his surrogates in Ireland I shall not dwell even so long. I will only ask, can the British cabinet entertain a rational hope of permanent connection and quiet government, or the Irish people of liberty or constitution, as long as those men continue in authority?

As to the sentiments of Ireland, with respect to the sister nation;—they should not be received upon the report of the courtier or the demagogue,—they have not been learned from either. We have been taught, by dear bought experience, the danger of taking our religious or political notions too implicitly on the authority of others, and the necessity of observing and thinking for ourselves.

Nature has written the first law of our existence in our insular situation; an island cannot be incorporated with another country without extinguishing that other, or being itself extinguished. We know, therefore, that in an union with Great Britain, this country would lose the vital principle of her existence, and become a trunk without a name. But an island is peculiarly fitted for having a common interest, and a permanent alliance, with another state; and mutual circumstances may make such alliance indispensibly necessary to both parties. Such do we think the general circumstances of these two countries have always been; such do we think more especially to be the circumstances of the present period. There can be no safety to either, but in affection and mutu-

al co-operation;—there can be no affection;—there can be no sincere or cordial co-operation without mutual faith and reciprocal justice:—we have seldom found those on the part of Britain. But let us not be supposed to confound her cabinet with her country. We have suffered much wrong, and have been often cruelly sacrificed; but seldom have the interests of Ireland been sacrificed to the real interests of Britain. The injuries to our commerce, were always injurious to British commerce; the attacks upon our constitution, must ever be dangerous to the liberties of Britain. When we have been sacrificed, it has been to the ambitious projects of her government and her ministers. When, therefore, we say, we will not any longer be so sacrificed, we speak not the language of hostility to her, but we avow the resolution of self-defence against the common internal enemy of both.—Against that common enemy we offer the alliance, not of slaves, but of freemen; we offer the alliance of co-equal confederated liberty. And we offer it in the conviction, that upon the basis only of equal freedom, can be sustained the respective prosperity of either country, or the general weal and union of the British empire.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

with the most profound respect

for your virtue, your genius,

and your fame, your unknown,

but very devoted servant.

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